



DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION
HEALTH CARE BULLETIN
Issued:

Bed Bugs [*Cimex lectularius* (Cimicidae)]

Audience: ALL

Recently there has been a resurgence of bed bugs in North America, Europe and Australia. They are not linked to any one's socioeconomic status. It is becoming a problem not only in homes but in hotels, dormitory rooms, and offices. The Environmental Protection Agency recently held a two day summit to address this issue and how to deal with them.

What are bed bugs and what do they look like?



(Magnified Image-Actual adult size approx ¼ inch)

Bed bugs are a small wingless insect (parasite) and are unable to fly. They start as hatchlings which are about the size of a poppy seed and grow to about ¼ inch in length as an adult. They are oval and flat in shape and are white or tan when molting and turn a deep brown or burnt orange.

With the use of pesticides like DDT they became scarce over the last 30-50 years. Since these pesticides are no longer used there has been a resurgence of the bed bugs.

They can most often be found in or around where people sleep especially bed frames box springs and mattresses where eggs can be laid and hatch undisturbed. They can also hide in other furniture, bedding, etc. When they are disturbed they seek and hide in any area that is dark such as light fixtures, furniture, walls, etc. Caution should be taken with any used furniture, especially mattresses and box springs.

What harm can they do?

They feed on warm-blooded animals including humans. Similar to a mosquito; they painlessly draw blood and inject a small amount of their saliva; typically this occurs at night. While they typically come out at night they are known to look for food during the day when hungry.

These Health Care Bulletins are for informational purposes only and are not meant to be a substitute for the advice provided by your own physician or other medical professional. You should not use the information contained herein for diagnosing a health or fitness problem or disease. You should always consult your own physician and medical advisors.



DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION
HEALTH CARE BULLETIN

Issued:

Repeated exposure over a period of time, usually several weeks, can cause an individual to become sensitized to the saliva. [If repeatedly bitten, it could result in a mild to intense allergic reaction.](#) It may be difficult to distinguish the bite from a mosquito or flea as the appearance is very similar. For this reason, medical advice should be sought to determine if the bites are from bed bugs and the appropriate course of treatment. As with other types of bites, they may itch and cause irritation. Scratching the area should be avoided to reduce the risk of secondary infection.

[How do you get bed bugs?](#)

Bed bugs travel on objects such as clothing, furniture, pillows, bedding, boxes and suitcases, etc. This enables them to move between hotels, apartments, homes, work and school. Even if a home or apartment looks clean it may harbor bed bugs. They can go through the structure to adjacent apartments through holes or cracks.

[What do I do if I find bed bugs?](#)

If you suspect you have bed bugs (bites that occur during the night while sleeping), the sleeping area should be carefully examined for bugs and their activity. All items in the area should be checked including curtains, rugs, carpets, clothing and furniture. If an area is heavily infested there may be a scent of coriander.

[What do I do if I find bed bugs?](#)

First confirm that they are bed bugs. A licensed professional pest control professional or exterminator can check the area and determine if they are present. The pest control professional can provide a plan to safely remove them from the area if they are found.

You can search for live bed bugs in the area. If they are found the areas should be thoroughly cleaned. This includes other areas as well as the infested area. If bed bugs are found in the bedroom the entire home should be cleaned as they can be carried room-to-room. In the infested areas, a stiff brush is recommended to scrub the area to dislodge any eggs. A powerful vacuum should be used to remove any from furniture including crevices and cracks. Each piece of furniture should be cleaned, including inside drawers and the backs.

Mattresses and box springs can be enclosed in mattress bags. If you use a mattress bag, make sure it permanently encloses the mattress and does not have holes, tears or other ways for the bed bugs to come out. Once the mattress has been enclosed, use permanent tape to ensure it is completely closed. If bugs are inside the sealed bag they will eventually die.

You can reduce the ability of the bugs to get into bedding by keeping beds away from walls, keep bedding from touching the floor, and place the bed frame legs in cups or dishes of mineral oil.



DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION
HEALTH CARE BULLETIN

Issued:

Seal any cracks or holes in your walls. Bugs can travel from room-to-room and apartment-to-apartment through these. Make sure all cracks are sealed including around baseboards, electrical sockets and moldings.

Education and prevention are the best ways to reduce your risk of acquiring bed bugs.

Additional information and resources:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bedbugs/DS00663>

<http://todaysfacilitymanager.com/facilityblog/2009/04/weird-wednesday-the-invasion-of-the-bed-bugs.html>

http://www.medicinenet.com/bed_bugs/article.htm

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol11no04/pdfs/04-1126.pdf>

Information the EPA Bed Bug Summit

<http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/cb/ppdc/bedbug-summit/index.html.4-17-09>

http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/cb/csb_page/updates/2009/bed-bug-summit.html